

Attachment 4.11 (e) (2) – Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified Goals and Priorities and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion.

(A) Provides an evaluation of the extent to which the goals and priorities were achieved.

Through **Goal 1**, DVR assisted 2,357 individuals with disabilities to achieve gainful employment in federal fiscal year 2008. This was an increase in rehabilitation outcomes of 522 (or 28%) over the previous year. Of these successful closures, 279 were in supported employment. DVR increased the number of individual plans for employment developed in FFY 2008 by 65% compared to FFY 2007. As a result, DVR increased the number of open cases being served in plan status from approximately 5,000 at the start of FFY 2008 to 6,200 at the end of the year.

For individuals determined eligible in the highest priority category, there was no waiting list for services in FFY 2008. Washington DVR began the federal fiscal year with almost 4,300 individuals on the waiting list in priorities categories 2 and 3. In February 2008, DVR released the remaining customers that were waiting for services in these categories and has been able to provide services to all eligible customers since that time. As a result, DVR was in a position to discontinue operating under order of selection at the end of federal fiscal year 2008.

Through maximizing employee strengths, increasing collaboration with partners, increasing the use of comparable services and benefits and more efficient use of contracted services, DVR has substantially reduced the average cost per case. Improved management of financial resources enabled DVR to allot more funds to purchased services. As a result, DVR was able to serve substantially more eligible individuals in 2008. DVR will continue to build its overall caseload, particularly the number of people being served in an IPE until we achieve alignment between caseload capacity and resources.

Under **Goal 2**, Washington DVR accomplished a number of strategies designed to enhance the organizational infrastructure and skills of its staff in providing high quality VR services. As a result, more of the individuals DVR serves achieve rehabilitation outcomes. DVR increased its rehabilitation rate from 45.8% in FFY 2006 to 54.7% in FFY 2007 and to 60.4% in FFY 2008. DVR also increased counselor performance expectations over the course of three years from 18 successful rehabilitations in FFY 2007, to 23 in FFY 2008, and to 24 successful rehabilitations in FFY 2009.

DVR invested significant training efforts to prepare counseling staff to use Motivational Interviewing and strengths-based approaches with customers. This counseling approach has empowered DVR staff to better identify how to assist individuals to move through the rehabilitation process in a timelier manner.

DVR's workshops for clients related to vocational exploration, dependable strengths and employment success (WorkStrides) continued to expand to more DVR offices throughout 2008. DVR employees were trained in 26 offices in 2008, compared to 10 offices in 2007. In addition, Disability Navigators and Vista interns were trained in 13 WorkSource locations. These workshops provide individuals with more in-depth information about their strengths,

interests, and capacities, enabling them to make better decisions about a suitable vocational goal and contributing to a higher rehabilitation rate. Additional expansion is planned throughout 2009.

In partnership with the State Department of Social and Health Services research staff, the Planning and Program Evaluation Unit for DVR and the State Rehabilitation Council began the process of planning a comprehensive statewide needs assessment to be completed in FFY 2009. DVR and the SRC have developed a number of activities designed to collect information about how DVR, partners, employers and other stakeholders can work together to improve employment outcomes and meet the needs of individuals with disabilities.

DVR developed and introduced training in 2008 on Rehabilitation Law. This course is offered to all interested staff and provides a foundation in the laws that authorize the VR program, as well as an overview of related laws, such as the ADA and IDEA.

Recruitment of new counselors continues to be a challenge and DVR has implemented new strategies to attract VR counselors to Washington DVR. However, a hiring freeze announced by the Governor in August 2008 and continuing until January 2009 impacted DVR's ability to recruit needed counselors. Improvements in the hiring process have significantly reduced the time it takes to complete the selection and hiring process. When the hiring freeze was lifted in January 2009, these improvements helped DVR move quickly to fill critical positions. The hiring freeze was again introduced as a bill by the state legislature and signed into law in February 2009 and will be in effect through July 2009, and possibly longer.

In 2008, DVR conducted a major project to enhance its electronic case management tool – STARS – as a result of feedback from field staff. The project involved significant representation of field staff across the state. Multiple screens were streamlined, particularly the IPE screens. The enhancement reduces staff time to input required information without compromising the integrity or quality of case service documentation. Results have been very well received by DVR staff at all levels.

In FFY 2007, DVR implemented an electronic case review tool for VR Supervisors and established a requirement for Supervisors to review two cases per counselor per month. The results of these reviews are rolled up to the Area and Statewide level to monitor trends and identify training needs. In FFY 2008, DVR implemented a statewide case review process coordinated by State Office and conducted by a team of field and state office staff. This process further enhances the ability of the agency to review and monitor compliance with federal regulation, trends in case services, and areas in which training or other action is needed. The reviews are indicating substantial improvement in quality and consistency of case service practices throughout the Division.

DVR also implemented a performance dashboard – a real-time snapshot of performance on four key performance indicators reported statewide, by area, unit and office that is easily accessible and available to all staff on our intranet web site.

To accomplish **Goal 3**, Washington DVR has taken numerous steps to build and strengthen partnerships that maximize resources and enable DVR to serve more people.

DVR has expanded networking among community partners by introducing an event called “Say Hey” in several communities. Say Hey brings together professionals in the disability and employment field, job seekers, and other interested individuals once a quarter to informally share information and resources related to employment and to help people get connected. The event started in Olympia, spread to Spokane and Seattle in 2008 with plans under way in 2009 to begin Say Hey in Tacoma and Kitsap County.

New resources were developed to better assist counseling staff to communicate the role of the agency to customers, partners, employers, and others. A DVR Guide to Services, along with informational DVDs were updated or developed over the past year to serve this purpose. Three new DVD’s were produced and disseminated to educate individuals with disabilities, employers and partners about DVR program and services.

As DVR planned for the transition out of Order of Selection, it reached out to several agencies with populations who have not been served or have been underserved for the past several years. DVR engaged two DSHS programs, the Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse and the Division of Employment Assistance Programs (TANF/Workfirst, GAU) to plan how these programs can collaborate. Efforts were made at the regional level to rebuild those partnerships by establishing referral procedures and conducting cross-training.

DVR continued efforts to build partnerships with the Mental Health system in Washington. DVR and MHD staff worked together to develop and present cross-system training throughout the state beginning in 2007 and continuing in 2008.

(B) Identify the strategies that contributed.

Goal 1:

- Increasing counselor expectations for IPEs and rehabilitations
- Eliminating the waiting list and officially discontinuing Order of Selection
- Redesigning and expanding WorkStrides
- Strengthening partnerships and use of comparable services and benefits
- Increasing staff skills and recognizing accomplishments

Goal 2:

- Identifying and filling key positions to support field services, including community relations, quality assurance, special projects and Workstrides coordinator
- Recruitment planning, hiring interns and improvements to the hiring process
- Redesigning of basic and advanced staff training curriculum, including Supervisor and RT Academy, and initiating statewide and area in-service training
- Quarterly meetings with the Senior Rehabilitation Team for communication and input from employees representing all positions and geographic areas around program priorities and changes, and a Director's Advisory Committee to hear staff concerns and issues
- Implementing an equipment replacement plan to assure staff have safe, reliable tools and equipment to perform their work
- Major enhancements to electronic case management tool, particularly the IPE
- Director and Chief of Field Services touring field offices regularly to listen to concerns and answer questions
- Implementing a statewide case review process

- Developing Government Management, Accountability and Performance (GMAP) reports and templates at the state and area level to identify and understand concerns and design strategies to address them
- Posting real-time performance dashboards on DVR's intranet for easy access by all DVR staff

Goal 3:

- Conducting public meetings to listen to partners and elicit feedback for DVR planning and priorities
- Introducing Say Hey – informal networking and information sharing events in local communities
- Refocusing partnership with DDD and MHD around creating employment opportunities that result in higher wage jobs for individuals with disabilities (Project SEARCH and state government)
- Establishing agreements with key partners and maintaining strong relations with existing partners
- Production of new DVDs for educating and marketing to employers, partners and potential DVR customers
- DVR-Mental Health Division cross system training

(C) Factors that impeded achievement of the goals.

Goal 1:

The number of individuals coming off the waiting list who were no longer interested or available for services presented significant challenges in FFY 2007. Locating people, assessing their current need for DVR services, and engaging them after a three-year waiting period slowed progress in plan development considerably. More than half of those cases were closed before a plan was developed. As a result, the number of plans developed in 2007 was low, as was the number of individuals in plan status going into FFY 2008.

In February 2008 when the last release was made from the DVR waiting list, the total number of open cases in plan development status was 5,500. Caseloads peaked and many were above 125. DVR increased plan development to the target level and maintained high production throughout the year. Caseloads gradually decreased throughout the remainder of the year as old waiting list cases were addressed; however, the peak workload did create backlogs for some offices. Combined with numerous vacant counselor positions, recruiting difficulties and the hiring freeze in August 2008, the average time to plan in most offices exceeded the 120 day standard.

Goal 2:

In the second half of FFY 2008, the state began experiencing an economic downturn in response to national issues. A hiring freeze in all state agencies was effective in August 2008 which left numerous offices short staffed indefinitely. Travel restrictions required DVR to cancel a statewide in-service training designed to position staff with the knowledge and skills to be successful as we moved out of order of selection. In addition, the Governor proposed eliminating scheduled employee raises.

Maintaining high morale in an environment where we ask employees to do more and more without needed staff support or deserved financial compensation is difficult. To make matters worse, as economic conditions deteriorated, discussion of layoffs and downsizing became more and more prevalent. Employees understandably become anxious and concerned.

Goal 3:

DVR continued to make great strides in strengthening partnerships in 2007. Peak caseloads resulting from eliminating the waiting list prevented DVR from making significant progress in establishing consistent, positive relationships in all high schools. That effort will be a higher priority in the next State Plan. Additionally, plans to implement a supported employment initiative in state government had to be postponed due to the hiring freeze.

(D) Assess the performance of the state on the standards and indicators.

Standard and Indicator 1.1: The number of individuals achieving employment outcomes during the current performance period compared to the previous performance period.

For the federal fiscal year (FFY) 2008, DVR achieved 2,357 employment outcomes. This was 538 over the number needed to pass this standard.

Standard and Indicator 1.2: The percentage of individuals receiving services under an individualized plan for employment who achieve employment outcomes.

DVR achieved a rehabilitation rate of 60.4% in FFY 2008. That was well above the standard of 55.8% required to meet this standard.

Standard and Indicator 1.3: Competitive employment outcomes as a percentage of all employment outcomes.

DVR achieved this standard with 98.8% of employment outcomes as competitive employment outcomes.

Standard and Indicator 1.4: Competitive employment outcomes for individuals with Significant Disabilities as a percentage of all employment outcomes.

99.4% of DVR's competitive employment outcomes were individuals with Significant Disabilities.

Standard and Indicator 1.5: The ratio of the average VR Hourly Wage to the Average State Hourly Wage.

DVR was slightly above and below this target throughout 2008 and ended the year with a rate of 51%, just under the federal standard. As of February 2009 DVR has shown improvement in this area and is currently meeting the target.

Standard and Indicator 1.6: The percent of individuals achieving Competitive Employment Outcomes who report their own income as Primary Source of Support at Closure as compared to application.

DVR passed the federal standard by achieving 60.8%.

Standard and Indicator 2.1: Access to services for Minorities as measured by the ratio of the Minority Service Rate to the Non-Minority Service Rate.

DVR passed the federal standard of 80% with a mark of 88%.

(E) Provides a report consistent with paragraph 4.12(c) of the plan on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities were utilized in the preceding year.

DVR is funding innovation and expansion activities to help improve the quality of outcomes our customers achieve. Some examples of activities we are funding include:

1. An initiative that focuses on government as a model employer was postponed in 2008. A Governor's hiring freeze prevented DVR from hiring a project coordinator for this initiative. In addition, the budget deficits and statewide hiring freeze were additional factors in DVR's decision to delay this project. However, DVR will move forward with efforts to increase government employment in FFY 2010.
2. Project Search: DVR began working with DD to replicate the Project SEARCH employment model in Washington and has made substantial progress during this State Plan period. DVR contracted with a noted supported employment and Project SEARCH consulting firm to provide technical assistance to several community programs interested in establishing Project SEARCH in local communities. As of March 2009, there are five Washington hospitals participating in Project SEARCH; Seattle Children's, Southwest Washington Medical Center-Vancouver, Sacred Heart Medical Center-Spokane, Yakima Valley Memorial Hospital, and Olympic Medical Center-Port Angeles. Additional projects are currently being developed in Moses Lake, Pullman, Colville and other locations with a variety of businesses beyond health care.
3. DVR has been in the process of researching and developing a vision of how a peer support training program can best prepare customers with mental health disabilities for successful employment, over the past couple of years. The funding of peer support positions may be a strategy that the Mental Health employment services providers explore as they become Employment Networks. We will continue to work with the mental health system in the upcoming State Plan on developing capacity for the establishment of Employment Networks and provision of longer term job retention support.
4. In FY 2008, DVR, through collaborative efforts with the Centers for Independent Living, established contracts with five of the six Centers. They are as follows: Center for Independence in Lakewood, Central Washington Disability Resources in Ellensburg, CORD in Spokane, disability Resources Connection in Everett, and Independent Living Resources of Southwest Washington in Vancouver. These contract agreements are designed to better provide services jointly to common customers with regard to benefits planning, Independent Living Evaluations, and money management/budgeting skills training.
5. The work of the Washington State Business Leadership Network and its partnership with DVR has been enhanced with the funding for the Executive Director this year. DVR has designated local staff that participates monthly in Business Leadership Network activities. The DVR Director participated with WSBLN leadership on a panel with the Seattle area Society of Human Resource Managers. The WSBLN is an active participant in Say Hey

activities (in Seattle, Tacoma, and Olympia). DVR will continue to provide SWBLN funding in the upcoming State Plan Period.

6. Collaborate with the Washington Initiative for Supported employment (WISE) and O'Neill & Associates to build capacity for increasing the skills of employment service providers. This has been an effective collaboration. During this State Plan period, DVR has provided funding support for the replication of the Highline Community College Employment Specialists Certificate program in Vancouver and Spokane. DVR has provided funding for a series of six workshops (one in each of the DSHS Regions) to build the skills of supported employment services staff and will continue funding through March 2010 with another series of workshops focused on partnerships with DVR and building job development and job placement skills. DVR has also provided support for a series of trainings for mental health employment service providers to improve their partnerships with DVR and increase their job development and job placement skills. The trainings have been coordinated and offered by TACE staff in locations throughout the state.

(F) Identify supported employment goals

The division estimates that in 2008, approximately 300 individuals will receive Supported Employment services and 200 individuals will achieve supported employment outcomes under Title VI Part B.

In 2008, DVR's goals for supported employment were to serve 300 individuals and to assist 200 individuals to achieve supported employment. DVR exceeded its goals by providing supported employment services to 1,766 individuals and assisting 259 individuals to achieve supported employment outcomes.